Heathcote Ward

Community Profile

September 2026

Sumner Beach

Christchurch City Council

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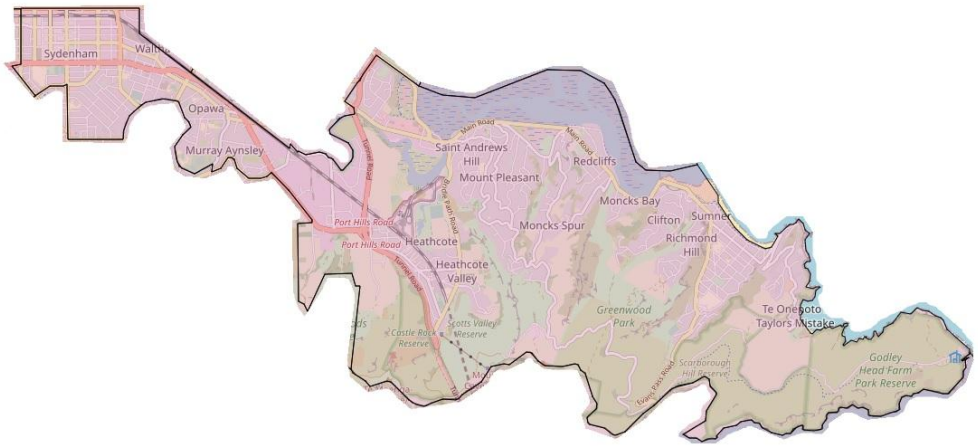
Risingholme Community Centre, Opawa

Profiles compiled by the Community Support and Partnerships Unit, Christchurch City Council

***New Zealand Index of Deprivation (NZDep)**

The NZDep is an area-based measure of socioeconomic deprivation in Aotearoa New Zealand created by Otago University. It measures the level of deprivation for people in each small area. It is based on nine Census variables. To read more about the variables used and view maps in more detail, visit http://www.ehinz.ac.nz/indicators/population-vulnerability/socioeconomic-deprivation-profile/

Ward Area Overview



Cyclist on the Coastal Pathway at sunset

The Heathcote Ward includes the suburbs of Sydenham, Waltham, Opawa, Heathcote Valley, Ferrymead, Saint Andrews Hill, Mt Pleasant, Moncks Spur, Redcliffs, Sumner, Scarborough and Te Onepoto Taylors Mistake.

There is a mix of residential, industrial, commercial and recreational areas. Sydenham and Waltham in the west are on the city fringe, while to the east Sumner and the sea suburbs meet the Pacific Ocean. In between, Heathcote and Ferrymead nestle on the north slopes of the Port Hills and Opawa follows the meandering Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.

Geographic features include the Port Hills, the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River and the Ihutai Avon Heathcote Estuary. All of which have active focus from environmental protection, regeneration and enhancement groups and volunteers.

The valleys, spurs and reserves in the Port Hills provide extensive walking and biking tracks. The beaches at Sumner, Scarborough and Taylors Mistake offer surfing, swimming and walking and the esplanade is an accessible path for wheelchairs, prams and bicycles.

There are 12 co-educational schools, including two composite schools: Te Kura Kaupapa Māori O Waitaha and Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education New Zealand. There is no high school.

Ferrymead Heritage Park houses a diverse collection of heritage exhibitions dedicated to preserving and showcasing New Zealand's rich heritage.

Facts and Figures

Heathcote Ward 2023 Census

25,749
Population

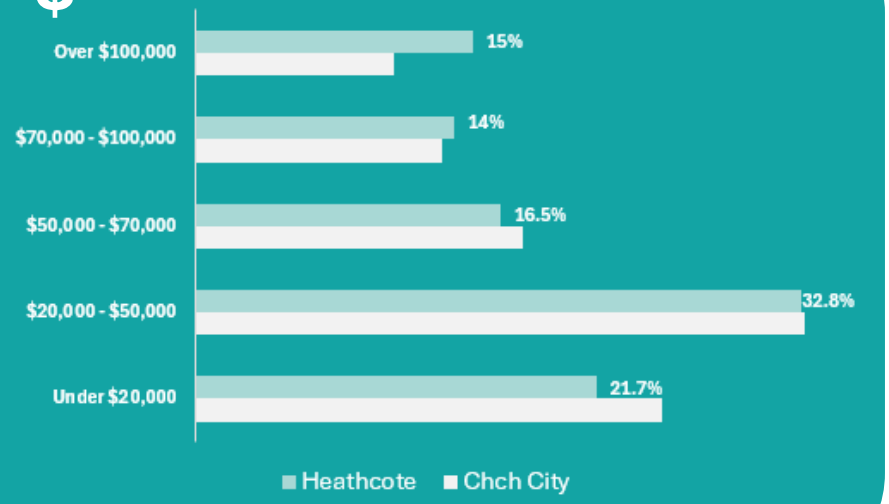
41.9
Median Age

10,923
Dwellings

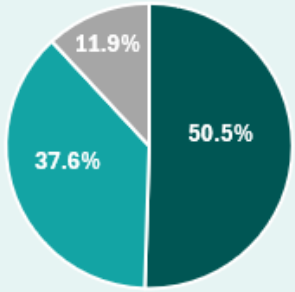
Cultural Diversity

85.3%	European
9%	Māori
2.7%	Pacific Peoples
9.5%	Asian
2.3%	MELAA

Personal Income



Family Type



- Couple without Children
- Couple with Child(ren)
- One Parent with Child(ren)

Businesses

Approximately
4,719 businesses
employing
20,053 people
(Feb 2024)

Community Infrastructure

8 Community development/support organisations	**40+** Sport/recreation groups	**9** Faith-based organisations	**12** Schools
1 Community-owned facility	**1** Council-owned facility	**6** Residents' Associations	**1** Council library

Facilities and Amenities

- 1 Council library, Matuku Takotako (Sumner Centre) and 3 volunteer run libraries; Redcliffs, Heathcote and Opawa Library
- 5 key shopping centres: Ferrymead, Redcliffs, Sumner, Sydenham South, Sydenham.
- 12 schools: 10 primary, 1 composite, 1 special
- 15 pre-schools
- 6 medical centres, Ferrymead, Mt Pleasant, Redcliffs, Sumner, Waltham, Sydenham.
- Recreation reserves: Montgomery Spur, Linda Woods, Castle Rock, Scotts Valley, John Britten, Scarborough Hill and Godley Head Farm and Heathcote Quarry Reserves, and the Bridle Path. In additional to multiple sports facilities and grounds, the Heathcote Ward offers the Gondola, Waltham Summer Pool, and beach amenity attractions.

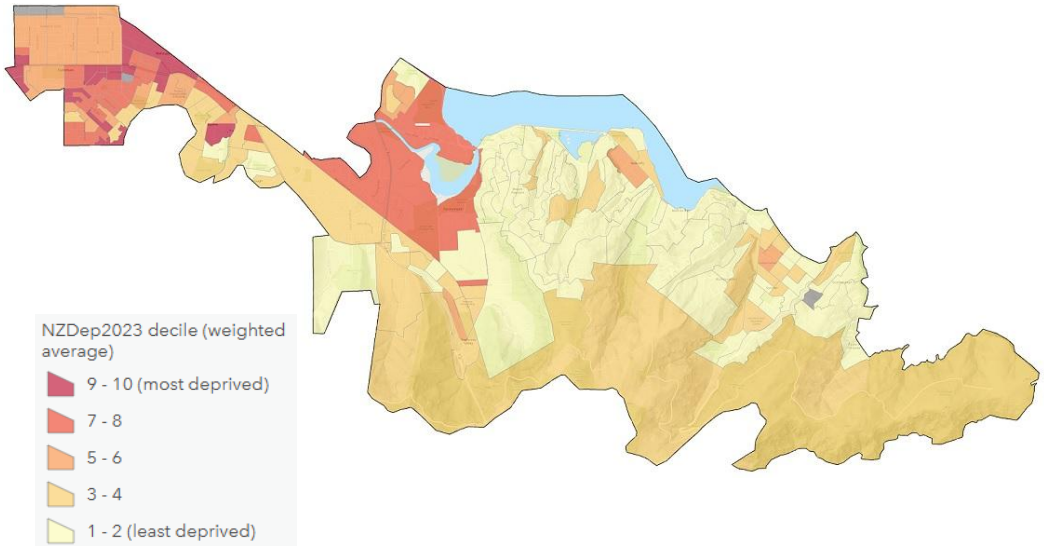
Nestled between the Port Hills and the Pacific, this ward offers a vibrant blend of natural beauty, strong community networks, and convenient urban living. With 27 schools across its suburbs - including 15 preschools, 10 primary, one composite, and one special school - it's a place where families thrive and education is close to home.

Community connection is alive and well, reflected in its four libraries: the modern Matuku Takotako: Sumner Centre and three cherished volunteer-run libraries in Redcliffs, Heathcote, and Opawa.

Health services are readily accessible, with six medical centres located in Ferrymead, Mt Pleasant, Redcliffs, Sumner, Waltham, and Sydenham. Local shopping is well catered for across five centres - Ferrymead, Redcliffs, Sumner, and two in Sydenham - offering a mix of boutique retail and everyday essentials.

The ward is also a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, with expansive reserves like Montgomery Spur, Scarborough Hill, and Godley Head Farm, plus unique attractions like the Christchurch Gondola, Waltham Summer Pool, and sweeping coastal beaches. Whether raising a family, enjoying retirement, or seeking adventure, this ward offers an enviable balance of lifestyle, learning, and leisure.

Socio-economic Deprivation Index



The scale of deprivation ranges from 1 to 10:

- 1 represents the areas with the least deprived scores.
- 10 represents the areas with the most deprived scores.

Relative to the rest of Christchurch City, Heathcote Ward had lower levels of deprivation overall.

In the Heathcote Ward, around 8 per cent of the population lived in the 'most deprived' areas (i.e. deciles 9 and 10), compared with 16 per cent of all of Christchurch City's population.

Around 41 per cent of this ward's population lived in the 'least deprived' areas (i.e. deciles 1 and 2), compared with 23 per cent of all of Christchurch City's population.

49.7 per cent of the population are employed full time and 32.4 per cent are not in the labour force this is comparable with Christchurch City.

The total personal income for 17.4 per cent of the population is between $30,000- $50,000 and for 16.5 per cent it is between $50,000 and $70,000. Both are lower than Christchurch city's average.

19.1 per cent of the population hold a bachelor's degree and level 7 qualification. This is higher than the Christchurch city figure of 16.4 per cent

67.1 per cent of dwellings are owned or partly owned and 32.9 per cent of dwellings are not owned.

The median sale price for properties in the last 12 months varies from $507,000 and $596,222 in Waltham and Sydenham respectively to $1,280,000 in Scarborough. Median sales prices in all the coastal suburbs exceeded $1,000,000.

22.2 per cent of people in a rental property pay a weekly rent between $300-$399 and 30.3 per cent between $400-$499.

There are 351 social housing units managed by the Ōtautahi Community Housing Trust and 280 Kāinga Ora properties.

Strengthening Communities Together Strategy

This section of the Community Profile provides a narrative of the ward in relation to the four Pillars of the strategy. You can view the full strategy document on the Council's website by clicking here.

Te Pou Tua Tahi: Te Tāngata

Pillar 1: People

The city actively promotes a culture of equity by valuing diversity and fostering inclusion across communities and generations.

Waltham Community Cottage

The Heathcote Ward population is predominantly European ethnicity (85.4 per cent compared to 75.9 per cent for Christchurch). The next highest ethnicities recorded are 9.5 per cent Asian (compared to 17.1 per cent for Christchurch)and 9.0 per cent Māori (compared to 11.2 per cent for Christchurch).

Across the ward there is a strong sense of community and capable organised groups deliver community projects, activities and events. They also provide practical support for residents, and umbrella support for informal groups. The city fringe suburbs have capable, well-established resource centres and social service providers to assist vulnerable citizens.

65.5 per cent of the population are aged 15-64, which is lower than the 67.1 per cent for Christchurch City. 19.5 per cent are 65 years and over, which is higher than the 16.3 per cent for Christchurch City.

Residents, support, leisure, sport, recreation, environmental and service groups all rely on volunteers to function. 14.5 per cent of the ward's population (over 15 years) undertake voluntary work for an organisation, group or marae. This is lower than the16 per cent in 2018 Census and reflects a general downturn in the number of people volunteering across the ward and wider city.

The Community Service Awards delivered by the Community Board recognise significant volunteer services donated by individuals and groups.

Youth groups provide places for connection opportunities, activities and programmes. The Community Board have a Youth Development Fund which young people undertaking recreational, competition or personal development activities can apply to for a grant.

Te Pou Tua Rua: Te Whenua

Pillar 2: Place

We support and help build connections between communities and their places and spaces to foster a sense of local identity, shared experience and stewardship.

Godwits at Te Ihutai Estuary

The Heathcote Ward is a blend of urban and rural and the majority of residents enjoy living within 20 minutes' drive of the Central Business District and a similar or lesser distance to hills or beaches.

Sydenham and Waltham have undergone extensive housing intensification old cottages are demolished and replaced with in-fill, high density multi-story housing. Other suburbs have lower levels of housing intensification and others none at all.

Metro bus services include route 3, Airport to Sumner, 8 Port to Port, airport to Lyttelton via Heathcote and Opawa and 44, Shirley to Westmorland which includes Sydenham Shops.

There are two key cycleways. The Puari ki Kahukura Heathcote Expressway connecting Heathcote to the central city and Te Ara Ihutai Christchurch Coastal Pathway from Ferrymead Bridge to Scarborough Park at Sumner Beach.

The 6.5 km Te Ara Ihutai Christchurch Coastal Pathway was originally envisioned by local residents.

The project was managed in partnership with Christchurch City Council, the local Community Board and the Christchurch Coastal Pathway Group. As an attraction it is a key reason to visit and stay in the city. It offers locals and tourists a pathway that connects people, land and sea. This multi-purpose facility promotes health, fitness and sustainable transport, with opportunities for running, cycling, skateboarding, walking, kayaking, surfing, windsurfing, and birdwatching along the scenic esplanade.

The Ōpāwaho Heathcote River flows through the Ward ending at Te Ihutai Estuary. The Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network is committed to working collaboratively to restore the ecological health of the river and its catchment. They advocate as the voice of the river and support over 33 volunteer restoration, enhancement and rejuvenation projects. In 2022 with support from Council and community stakeholders they produced a framework plan for the restoration of the lower Ōpāwaho Heathcote River, from Opawa to the estuary edge.

Te Ihutai Estuary is an internationally recognised migratory bird habitat that supports diverse birdlife, including migratory godwits. The Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust advocates for future protection policies and work to mitigate the detrimental effects of development on the estuary edge and public access for recreational activity: rising sea levels and acidification, drought, sedimentation, vulnerable species disturbance, loss of biodiversity and pests.

The Port Hills are of special significance for their environmental, geological and scenic values. They offer outstanding recreational opportunities and can be explored on foot, by bike or by driving. The Summit Road Society owns three reserves, the others are managed by Christchurch City Council. Predator Free Port Hills is a project working towards pest eradication, involving residents and community groups.

Te Pou Tua Toru: Te Mahi

Pillar 3: Participation

Residents and groups in the wider community are socially and actively engaged and able to initiate and influence decisions affecting their lives.

Morning tea at the Heathcote Community Centre

The communities across this ward are deeply engaged, with a strong understanding of local government processes and a shared commitment to shaping the future of their neighbourhoods. Residents regularly take part in Council consultations, make submissions on policy reviews, and attend public forums and Community Board meetings to speak on matters that impact their daily lives. This active participation reflects a culture of informed advocacy and a collective desire to protect and enhance the unique character of the area.

Resident and interest groups play an essential role in both representing local voices and driving community-led initiatives.

Groups like the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network (OHRN) advocate for the health and protection of the river, working alongside Council and other agencies to improve water quality and environmental outcomes (ohrn.nz).

On the hills, the Summit Road Society and Predator Free Port Hills lead critical conservation work, from pest control to native planting, supported by regular community planting days that draw volunteers from all corners of the ward (summitroadsociety.org.nz, predatorfreeporthills.org.nz).

Many community facilities in the area are locally managed, showcasing a strong tradition of grassroots leadership.

The Heathcote Valley Community Association, for example, runs the Heathcote Community Centre - a space that hosts events, meetings, and programmes that reflect the needs of local people. These associations and groups are not just service providers - they are central to the social fabric of the ward.

Community Board members maintain close relationships with these groups and are often present at residents' meetings, supporting local initiatives and feeding community concerns directly into Council decision-making. They are a key point of contact for individuals seeking advice or help navigating council processes, and they play a vital role in connecting communities with the tools and resources they need.

Across this diverse ward, there's a strong sense that local voices matter - and more importantly, that they're being heard.

Te Pou Tua Rua: Te Whenua

Pillar 4: Preparedness

People feel safe in their communities and neighbourhoods and work together to understand, adapt and thrive in the context of change and disruption.

Climate Change Resilience

Climate change is the biggest challenge of our time. It is already affecting our weather, health and wellbeing, natural environment, taonga species, mahinga kai, food production, biosecurity, infrastructure, and the economy.

The Christchurch City Council is responding to climate change in Ōtautahi Christchurch by working towards targets for reducing emissions, and by helping our communities prepare for and adapt to our changing climate.

Key risks identified include hot weather and drought, strong winds, wildfires, heavy rain and flooding, and rising sea level, coastal and ocean changes.

The ward faces several natural hazard risks due to its varied geography, coastal location, and hillside terrain. Wildfires are a significant concern in the Port Hills, with the most recent major incident occurring in February 2024. The dry conditions and steep landscapes make these areas particularly vulnerable during summer months.

Coastal suburbs are increasingly exposed to flooding and inundation as a result of sea level rise and more frequent adverse weather events. Similarly, communities along the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River experience flooding during periods of high rainfall, particularly when high tides coincide, causing the river to overflow its banks. In the hill suburbs, heavy rain also brings the risk of landslides.

Other risks include tsunamis, which threaten all coastal communities, and earthquakes, which remain an ever-present hazard across the entire ward due to Christchurch's seismic history.

In response, local residents' associations are playing an active role in strengthening community resilience.

The Redcliffs Residents Association maintains an emergency planning information page on their website and has established a dedicated Response and Resilience Team, which can activate a Community Emergency Hub when needed. Sumner Community Residents Association and Hub have Civil Defence information on their website and can set up a Community Emergency Hub if required. The Heathcote Valley Community Association is in the process of exploring emergency preparedness options to support their neighbourhood.

These community-led initiatives, combined with ongoing support from the Community Board and Council, are key to ensuring residents are informed, connected, and ready to respond in times of crisis.

Key Community Issues

Issue	Actions being taken
Fire risk and preparedness on the Port Hills	The Community Board have held community information sessions around fire preparedness. Residents groups have also held awareness raising sessions.
Coastal Hazards / anticipated sea level rise This includes Coastal Flooding, Coastal Erosion and Groundwater.	In line with the Ministry of Environments Coastal and Climate Change Guidance for Local Government, CCC have developed a Coastal Hazards Adaptation Planning Programme. Phase one of the coastal hazard adaptation planning process is underway for the Lower Ōpāwaho Heathcote to Taylors Mistake area. This area was identified based on coastal hazard risk, the number of public and private assets exposed to future flooding and coastal erosion, and feedback from communities about their readiness to take part in adaptation planning.
Ki uta ki tai - from the hills to the sea **Ōpāwaho Heathcote River**	Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network. The Community Board granted $102,000 from its Better Off Fund towards an Integrated Pest Plant Management Project. This partnership brings together the community and council staff to better manage and where possible eradicate pest plants that threaten the water quality of the Ōpāwaho River and its surrounding environment. The Council has allocated, $5 million (CAPEX of $500,000 per year) over 10 years to provide necessary expertise to develop the Lower Ōpāwaho /Heathcote River Guidance Plan into an implementation plan with prioritised projects. The Council allocated $1.7 million in the first three years of the 2024-34 Long Term Plan for the habitat restoration/pest control programmes for Coastal and Plains and Port Hills and Banks Peninsula. Port Hills Management Plan - The Community Board has met with interested community groups about the proposed plan. This has helped gain some shared understanding about their aspirations for the plan and assist them to advocate clearly when the planning processes begins. Parks staff are coordinating a meeting with Treaty partners prior to a workshop with relevant landowners. The team will then be looking to have a workshop with key stakeholders. The Community Board granted $56,534 from its Better Off Fund to the Summit Road Society towards Port Hills planting, in Linda Woods Reserve, increasing biodiversity and sedimentation prevention.

Issue	Actions being taken
Community Safety	Community safety is a key concern raised by residents in the Heathcote Ward, with issues ranging from speeding and dangerous driving to thefts and burglaries. In response, local Police maintain an active presence in the community, regularly attending public meetings and providing updates to the Community Board. These engagements help foster open dialogue and ensure residents' concerns are acknowledged and addressed. Supporting these efforts, the local Community Patrol plays a vital role in enhancing neighbourhood safety through regular patrols, visibility, and reporting suspicious activity. Their presence contributes to crime prevention and builds a sense of security in the community.
Anti-social activity	Anti-social activity continues to be a concern in parts of the Heathcote Ward, with residents regularly reporting issues such as graffiti, vandalism, and littering - particularly in public spaces like King Park. Damage to park amenities and increased rubbish have raised concerns about the ongoing maintenance and care of shared community areas. The presence of Boy Racers in some parts of the ward also contributes to noise disturbances and feelings of unease, especially during late evening hours. In Sumner, the long-anticipated Skate and Scooter Park and Village Green officially opened in December 2024, following extensive community engagement and planning. This new space has quickly become a vibrant hub for youth and families, supporting positive recreation and reducing idle or disruptive behaviour. While the new facility is now fully operational, the popularity of the temporary skate ramp has led to its retention, offering additional space for young people to gather and stay active in a constructive environment.
Safe Transport Choice	The Community Board continues to advocate strongly for safe, accessible, and sustainable transport options across the Heathcote Ward. Improving cycling infrastructure remains a key focus, where residents have spoken to the Board and highlighted the need for safer and more connected routes to link with the central city and nearby suburbs. The Community Board continues to support enhancements that make public transport a more attractive and viable choice - particularly for youth, older adults, and those without private vehicles.